

Late Night Supercomm by **theamiableanachronism**

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Summary: It's not a nightmare she's waking him up for...but she HAS to say SOMETHING.

Late Night Supercomm

El lies awake for hours, watching her ceiling fan spin around and around before finally reaching for the supercomm on her nightstand and turning it to Mike's channel. She swallows nervously as the static crackles. It's not a nightmare she's waking him up for...but she HAS to say SOMETHING.

"Mike?" she whispers into the speaker.

Almost instantaneously, he responds.

"El?"

She can hear the sleep heavy in his voice and her stomach twists with guilt.

"I'm sorry I woke you up."

"Nonono, El, it's all right. You didn't wake me up," he says through an unsuccessfully stifled yawn. "What did you need? Are you okay?"

Is she okay? Of course. She's talking to him. That's why she called. That's why she was lying awake for all those hours.

That's why all of a sudden, she doesn't know what to say.

"El?"

"Yes," she squeezes her eyes shut and shakes her head. "I'm okay." She thought she'd finally figured out how to say it. But now the worries are back, the worries that tell her maybe she shouldn't. That it's silly. That it's not something she SHOULD say, that it's only for people like Joyce and Hopper and Nancy and Jonathan.

The static crackles. "Are you sure?" Concern now tinges Mike's voice and she can picture his face with the tiny frown he always wears when he's worrying. She never likes him to worry, but something about it makes her heart feel funny, like it's expanding. She feels that way around Joyce and Hopper and Jonathan and Will whenever they tell her they love her and whenever she tells them she loves them too. But she also feels like that around Mike. Whenever she is around him. Or even when she just thinks about him. And she feels dizzy. Or as if she is wearing all of her jackets at once, even if she's only in her pajamas.

Is that still love? It's what she's been thinking about all night: she likes being around him. He makes her happy. Isn't that love? She's decided she has to tell him, before all the words slip away from her again.

"I'm sure," she finally responds.

He sighs, relieved. "Okay, good."

She hears the smile in his voice and her heart expands again. So she takes a deep breath.

"I love you, Mike."

Silence.

And more silence.

And more silence.

Oh no.

She'd been wrong. She shouldn't have said anything. Words never came out the right way for her, and now they'd come out all wrong again. A lump grows in her throat as she realizes she doesn't even know what else to say, even to try and fix it. The silence just pounds in her ears, making her eyes water.

She is just about to put the supercomm back on the nightstand and crawl deep under the covers where she will never have to talk to anyone again when the supercomm crackles back to life.

"I love you, too, El!"

His voice sounds strange, higher and faster and like he's whispering and yelling at the same time, but it's MIKE'S VOICE saying THOSE WORDS and that makes her happier than anything.

(If only she had known that the only reason he hadn't answered right away had been because he'd fallen off his bed in shock and lain motionless on the floor, staring in disbelief at the ceiling. Had she known that, she might have been spared those awful minutes of sadness and worry and doubt.)

The next morning is Saturday and Hopper drops El off at Mike's house as usual for breakfast. Mike answers the door and before she can say a word, he pulls her into the tightest hug he's ever given her, one that she tries to return just as tightly.

Mrs. Wheeler pokes her head around the corner to tell them the pancakes are ready, and they break apart (although their hands remain clasped), and the smile on Mike's face is so big, El's already huge smile only gets bigger.

When it's time to go home, and she's putting on her jacket by the door, Mike suddenly jumps and pulls her away by the hand he's been holding all day, saying she's forgotten something in the basement.

When they get there, Mike takes her other hand, takes a deep breath and says in a rush,

"I love you El, I know I said it last night but I wanted to tell you in person, too."

And even though she's only put on one jacket, it might as well be

four. She smiles down at their intertwined hands and then back up at his red smiling face.

"I love you, too."

They both let out a breath they didn't know they'd been holding that turns into giggles and then into another tight hug.

They run back up the stairs and to the front door, where both of them have the same idea: to quickly kiss the other on the cheek. Neither of them make it because as El turns around and Mike leans in, their lips meet instead and they spring back, surprised (though definitely not unhappy, if their grins and rosy cheeks are any indicator).

There's the dizzy feeling again and she's sure that's why the only soft words that come out of her mouth are "A kiss."

Mike's grin only becomes more sheepish and he glances down at the floor. El turns to leave, and as she steps outside, she whispers one last, "Love you, Mike," before shutting the door gently behind her.

(Which means that she doesn't see Mike calmly walk upstairs to his bedroom, where he collapses on the bed and muffles his disbelieving jubilant squeaks into his pillow.)

When Hopper sees her ear-to-ear smile and rosy cheeks, all he asks is, "Huh, good day, kid?"

"Very good," she says with a giddy nod as she feels her heart expand for the millionth time that day. She knows it won't be the last.